

# **Kit for New Parents Focus Groups with Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers**

## **Executive Summary**

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and  
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Copies of the full report may be obtained at: [www.etr.org/FFN/](http://www.etr.org/FFN/)  
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## **Background**

As an extension to the Informal Child Caregiver Support Project, ETR Associates conducted eight focus groups with 58 family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers throughout California. The primary goals of the interviews were to determine

1. whether FFN caregivers would like to receive the Kit for New Parents (KNP),
2. what modifications to the KNP, if any, would make the materials more useful and increase the likelihood that they would be used by other FFN caregivers,
3. whether FFN caregivers are interested in becoming licensed, and
4. whether FFN caregivers would be interested in watching educational TV for information on child development and other topics related to caregiving.

Eight focus group locations were selected from among the 24 locations where the Phase 1 and Phase 2 focus groups for the Informal Child Caregiver Support Project were held. These were in communities that had funded First 5 School Readiness Initiative programs at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year. In most cases, the median family income of the selected community was below the state median. Phase 1 and Phase 2 field coordinators, who had ties to FFN caregivers who worked in the communities corresponding to the selected focus group locations, were responsible for participant recruitment and focus groups logistics (e.g., securing a facility, purchasing incentives for participants).

## **Participation**

### **Participant Characteristics<sup>1</sup>**

Overall there were 58 eligible participants in the eight focus groups. Groups ranged in size from four to nine participants, with an average of about seven participants per group. Eighty-three percent of those who had initially consented to participate attended the groups.

- Most participants were female, with an average age of 45 years old.
- Almost half of the caregivers were Hispanic/Latino; almost one-quarter were Caucasian. Seventeen percent were African American, and 14% were Asian (Chinese or Vietnamese).
- Forty-three percent of the caregivers identified English as their primary language; 41% identified Spanish; and 14% identified an Asian language (Chinese or Vietnamese).
- Forty-eight percent of the caregivers reported either having had some college or having a college degree. Thirty percent did not graduate from high school.
- Over half (61%) of the caregivers reported that they had had CPR training; 37% had it within the two years prior to completing the survey.
- Fifty-seven percent of the caregivers reported that they cared for a child under age six whose family was not in a subsidy program.
- Forty-five percent of the caregivers cared for a grandchild under age six; 20% cared for a niece or nephew. About one-third (31%) of the caregivers cared for a child under age six who was not a relative.
- Twenty-two percent of the caregivers reported caring for children with disabilities and other special needs under age six.

### **Interest in Licensing**

- Forty-one percent of the caregivers reported being interested in obtaining a childcare license; less than one-third (29%) of this 43% had ever attended a licensing orientation. Forty-three percent of the caregivers said they did not want a license.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that these data are not necessarily representative of the entire population of FFN caregivers in California. These data reflect the demographics of the study population, which was a purposeful sample of caregivers mostly in and around neighborhoods with School Readiness Initiative programs.

- During the focus groups, the caregivers were asked why they were or were not interested in licensing. Those who were interested reported wanting to be able to make more money or have more job security. Some said that either they or the children's parents felt that having a license meant that the caregiver has more knowledge and care giving skills than a caregiver without a license. Participants who were not interested in a childcare license had different reasons for not wanting one. Some did not want to care for any more children, and some did not want to care for unrelated children. Others talked about not wanting to deal with the paperwork, the legal aspects of being licensed, keeping up the license, or being monitored.

## **Findings**

### **Overall Usefulness of KNP**

Most caregivers said that they found the KNP useful and that they thought the entire KNP should be included as part of a Supplemental Materials Kit for caregivers. Some general recommendations were:

- include some more information relevant to caregivers (like resources, phone numbers, ideas for activities, places to find toys and books),
- include a first aid kit,
- include more items for the children (participants liked the sample supplemental materials shown, including children's board books, letter shaped dough cutters, puppets, and a soft-sided puzzle book), and
- make the KNP an option and let caregivers know that it is available if they want it.

### **Parent's Guide**

Almost all of those who looked at the Parent's Guide said they found it useful.

Recommendations for the Guide included:

- translate to Vietnamese/Chinese,
- perforate pages so caregivers can tear them out and make copies for parents,
- include information on caregiver legal rights and responsibilities, and
- make sure web addresses and phone numbers are updated.

### **Informational Booklets**

Most of the participants who looked at the booklets found them useful. When asked which booklets they would most want, more chose the discipline and health booklets over others.

Participants had several recommendations, including:

- combine all the booklets into one booklet,
- provide caregiver-specific information (e.g., questions to ask parents about nutrition, how to get children to eat or behave in a certain way if parents do not have the same expectations, "what if" scenarios that they might find themselves in, how to discipline another person's child), and
- develop a first aid booklet.

### **Videos**

Most of the participants who watched the videos said that they found them useful. When asked which videos they would most want, most participants said they could not choose.

Recommendations were to:

- create one or two posters per video to highlight main points,
- create a first aid video,
- show how to discipline another person's child,

- make situations less ideal (e.g., show what to do if time-out does not work),
- show how to deal with several children at once, and
- put all six videos on one DVD (note that most participants preferred DVD to video or had no preference).

### **PBS Caregiver Program**

The caregivers were asked a series of questions on the value of developing an educational television program for FFN caregivers to be broadcast on a PBS station.

- Most non-Hispanic participants and some Hispanic participants said they felt a television program was a good way for them to get educational information.
- Two additional methods mentioned in the Hispanic groups were radio and meetings with other caregivers. Some of the Hispanic caregivers said that they preferred meetings with other caregivers (for networking and support) to the PBS program, but they would still watch the PBS program.
- All non-Hispanic participants who have a TV watch PBS; approximately half of Hispanic participants do.
- Almost all participants said they would watch an educational series for caregivers on PBS.
- Most Spanish-speaking participants preferred to have the program on the Spanish-language station. However, they would watch it on PBS.
- The preferred time varied; most preferred to have it aired at times when they were not caring for children (early morning or evenings); some said it depended on whether the program was for kids also or just caregivers.
- Participants varied on whether or not they would videotape the program if they missed it.

### **Summary**

Almost all participants reviewed at least parts of their KNP in the week or so they had them prior to the group. Almost all found what they reviewed to be **useful** and **would** recommend giving the KNP to caregivers. The **information on discipline was most appealing** to caregivers.

Some caregivers asked for **additional information relevant to their work** (e.g., resources or phone numbers for them, how to apply tips to other people's children, professional information). Others asked for **more detail on what to do when the tips given do not work** (e.g., when children will not go into time out). They said the examples given (in videos) were too ideal (e.g., sometimes they have to finish shopping and cannot remove the child from the store, the situations do not show adults having to deal with multiple children at once).

Many caregivers discussed the fact that children often spend more time with caregivers than parents, so it was **important for caregivers to have the same information as parents**, but it was also important for parents to recognize this role of the caregiver. It is important to remember the fact that the caregivers are not the parents, and, therefore, they have a different type of bond with the child. Also, some of these caregivers do not have children of their own. It is important to recognize the impact of the different relationship on factors such as discipline, frustration levels, stress, emotional bonding, and so forth.